

EDWARD L. GREENE AND HOWELL'S
"FLORA OF NORTHWEST AMERICA"

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Numerous writers have referred to the fact that Thomas J. Howell, pioneer Oregon botanist, published the first flora of the Northwest under very difficult circumstances by himself setting all of the type by hand and having his friend, Martin Gorman, read the proofs. A fact which no writer has referred to is that without the help of Edward L. Greene the book would probably never have been completed. Only one writer, Alice Eastwood (*Erythea* 6:58-60. 1898), in writing a review of the second fascicle of Howell's Flora refers to the style of nomenclature as that centering around Greene. The correspondence of Thomas Howell to Edward L. Greene reveals an interesting story of determination on the part of the pioneer botanist, destitute and with but three months of formal schooling, to complete a badly needed flora for the only great section of the country not treated by such a work.

The first reference to his book occurred early in April, 1892, when Howell wrote to Greene: "I have been very busy writing my Flora of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho of which I enclose a specimen page. I hope to have it published about the first of January next."

The specimen page seems to have caused a quick critical reply from Greene for later in the month (both dates are difficult to read), Howell wrote:

Thank you for your criticism of my work but it should have been stated in a former letter that it is not yet being printed. The sheet I sent you was set up from an unrevised copy and was merely intended to base calculations as to the number of pages and cost of publishing, and was not submitted to an expert proofreader for correction. It will all have to be set over agane, and I will say here there will be no bad spelling or punctuation in it. . . . The other corrections are such as any expert proofreader would notice. Not more than a half dozen sheets of this has been distributed, so they will not do much harm.

On December 12, 1892 he wrote Greene that his financial troubles "by which I will probably loose all my savings has run me nearly crazy for the past eight months."

The next letter referring to the book was dated April 24, 1896, in which Howell mentioned that except for the slowness of the printers the whole of Part I would have been ready for distribution. The following month, May 6, 1896, he wrote:

Nothing would please me more than have you pass upon every page of my proposed Flora before it goes to press. Can you point out the way this can be done. Or can you show me how it can get published at all? There is no one here that can do the work except under my direct supervision and then they want double price for doing it, and want their pay in advance and this I am unable to meet for I have been reduced to poverty by some unfortunate investments.

As to the pages already printed they will probably never be distributed in their present form, for the parties that undertook to do the printing have just gone back on their contract, and refuse to do any more of it on any terms that I can meet. This leaves me on the verge of despair for the manuscript that I have represents ten years of the best part of my life, and to loose it now looks to me like throwing away life itself.

Howell mentioned in the same letter that he was going to try to get the American Book Company to publish it but was afraid he would have to alter the book too much to be satisfactory. He sent Greene some printed pages of the book and commented on the many errors in printing.

Greene wrote immediately to Howell and offered financial help of which Howell seemed very appreciative and wrote at length concerning his present experience and the prospects of his flora. He told Greene that 28 pages had been printed when the publisher gave up the contract (no reason was given but it is believed the printer was unable to read Howell's poor handwriting of technical terms and set the copy correctly). Howell estimated that to continue the book as the sample pages would require from 600 to 700 pages and could be published with less capital by getting out parts of about 100 pages each. He promised Greene all the proceeds from the sales and liberal pay for his services if he could work out any way to publish the book.

In letters of June 11, and September 14, 1896, he thanked Greene for his offer to help with the book and promised that Greene's wishes would be strictly adhered to. Howell reported that it would be impossible to have the American Book Company publish the Flora. The American Book Company agreed to invest \$1,000 in the book if Howell could invest \$2,000 for the preparation of the "Electraplates" but being unable to secure that amount the situation seemed hopeless. If Howell could raise the \$2,000 the American Book Company contemplated printing 2000 copies which would bring \$3,200. With the book company taking out the first \$1,000 and then half of the remainder there would be nothing left for Howell. In conclusion Howell wrote, "You once made me a proposition to loan me a few hundred dollars to publish the book with, will you let me know how much you can let me have for the purpose and on what terms."

A week later, September 21, 1896, Greene answered Howell's letter raising a number of questions. To these Howell replied October 1, 1896:

I see you still have the impression that I intend to have *illustrations* in my proposed book, which I wish to assure you *is not the case* for I never had any intention of *illustrations* at all; the *plates* spoken of are *Book plates* that is *electroplates* of the text and *not illustration plates*.

There are two ways of making a smaller book of it. One is to *condense the descriptions* and thereby make them worthless. The other is to leave out a large part of the species and make an incomplete work.

There are about 3500 species of plants in the territory that I propose to cover, and nine tenths of them grow in Oregon, so you see that it will not reduce the book much to reduce the territory. I have made a careful estimate and find that I can have

1000 copies of 600 pages published here for \$1,000. I can do this so cheap because I have a pretty fair printing outfit of my own and I have orders on hand now to assure the sale of 1000 copies in less than two years at \$2.50 per copy.

With \$500 I could get the book out next spring, but I have no way of getting that amount now, and I would not think of letting you put one dollar into this book that you do not feel certain that you will get it back agane with interest.

In a letter to Greene dated October 13, 1896, Howeil again assured him that the book would sell readily and that he did not immediately need \$500 but could get started on \$50 or \$100. He guaranteed Greene that every page would be sent him for criticism before going to press and would be printed with his own type. With the letter he sent 28 pages of proof sheets for correction.

His proof sheets were imperfect and drew some criticism from Greene but in reply Howell wrote November 26, 1896, "I am very thankful for your notes and criticisms and shall profit by them to the fullest extent."

On December 21, 1896, Howell again suggested getting the book out in parts in order to get it published with less capital. Since he was held up 16 days waiting for his proofs to arrive from Greene, he suggested sending his manuscript for criticism and correction so that the work would proceed faster. Pages of manuscript and proof were sent and more were mailed on December 26, 1896.

That Greene was very critical of the manuscript is evident from Howell's reply of January 11, 1897:

Your letter with the Mss. was received yesterday, and to say that I am surprised at what you say is stating it mildly; for I certainly do not deserve the harsh things that you say about me. You seem to forget that most of my copy was written some seven years ago and was made up different from what this is, for a year ago I went over it and made it conform with Mr. Robinson's work, not because I particularly liked it but because as a whole I liked it a little better than the way I had it. But you seme to think that I must know what you are doing in advance of its publication, for I had not read Pittonia when I sent you the copy and certainly could not have known what was in it, as my letter of a day or two later will show. Now if you had went at the copy good naturally and just changed names when you thought they were incorrect you would have saved yourself much trouble. . . . I do not feel disposed to quarrel with you, but you will remember that my library is very small and that I live many hundred miles from any good one, and therefore work at a great disadvantage.

Other references to the difficulties in completing the book were:

January 16, 1897

I have been getting along very slow with the work, but have now got to where I can go faster and will have the first 100 pages ready to issue about the first of February. I am also entirely out of money.

January 31, 1897

Your note of the 23d inst. with Draft for 70 dollars is at hand and I enclose note for the two as you requested.

If I stated that I would have 100 pages out the first of February it was a mistake it should have been the first of March.

February 25, 1897

With this I send you another 16 pages of the book and I have a good start on the next 16 making 112 in all. With that I shall have a few hundred copies bound and put on the market, and I expect a little revenue from it. . . .

I shall send you manuscript in a few days for critical examination to avoid making any more blunders. I expected some money of my own to come in by this time to meet maturing bills, but it has not yet arrived, and I fear now it will not very soon and I am getting nearly broke again.

March 11, 1897

Your letter the 5th inst, with Draft was received today. I had March 10th printed on my title page, but on account of delay at the bindery I have been unable to send out part I yet, but will do so in a day or two. I wish now that I had made the date March 15th.

March 20, 1897

I have been unwell lately and unable to do much and am but little better now. I will soon begin setting the type for another part which I hope to have ready early in May.

May 29, 1897

Your letter with the draft for \$40 was received a short time ago. I am extremely sorry that I was unable to return it at once, but I had run some bills that I had to pay, and I had no other means of paying them now, so I had to use it.

Only a few scattered letters between 1898 and 1904 have been preserved and these contain but few references to the publication of Howell's Flora.

April 16, 1902

Mr. Gorman informs me that you lack fascicle 4 of my Flora so I send you it to you under separate cover.

October 22, 1902

I am drove nearly to death at the present trying to make a living and get my Flora done at the same time.

While the preceding excerpts of Howell's letters reveal the tremendous hardships under which the first Flora of the Northwest was published, the account is not complete. The Howell-Greene correspondence also contains numerous references to problems relating to the identification, determination and naming of plants to be included in the book. It is not the purpose of this paper to include such material.

Howell's Flora was completed in 1903 after seven separate fascicles were bound and distributed. Howell reported to Eva Emory Dye, Oregon historical writer, that a thousand copies were printed but only three hundred were bound. An unknown additional number were bound after Howell's death late in 1912.

The writer is indebted to Albert L. Delisle, curator of the Greene-Nieuwland Herbarium of the University of Notre Dame, for making available the Howell-Greene correspondence:

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